

Message Text

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70

ACTION AF-18

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R 030912Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0167

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBBABANE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS PRETORIA 2945

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EMIN, ELAB,SF

SUBJECT: CHAMBER OF MINES ANNOUNCES PUSH TOWARD MECHANIZATION

1. AN UPGRADING OF JOBS PERFORMED BY BOTH BLACK AND WHITE MINERS AND A REDUCTION OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DEPENDENCY ON FOREIGN LABOR ARE THE EXPECTED RESULTS OF A MASSIVE R 100 TO R 150 (\$150 TO \$225) MILLION MECHANIZATION PROGRAM ANNOUNCED BY THE CHAMBER OF MINES ON JULY 1. CHAMBER PRESIDENT A.W.S. SCHUMANN EXPLAINED THAT THE CRASH PROGRAM IS BEING DESIGNED TO NARROW THE WAGE GAP BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE MINERS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF GOLD MINING OPERATIONS TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE EXPANSION OF THE INDUSTRY IN THE FACE OF RISING LABOR COSTS.HE NOTED THE MECHANIZATION PROGRAM WAS THE BIGGEST EVER LAUNCHED BY PRIVATE ENTERPRISE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

2. SCHUMANN SAID THE PROGRAM WOULD AIM AT THE INTRODUCTION OF MECHANIZED ROCK-BREAKING AT THE WORK FORCE TO REPLACE LABOR INTENSIVE AND DANGEROUS PROCEDURES INVOLVING DRILLING AND USE OF

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EXPLOSIVES. "THE MAN WITH THE SHOVEL" WILL GIVE WAY "TO THE

MAN WITH THE MACHINE," HE SAID. "THE EFFECT WILL BE TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF WORK DONE BY WHITES AT PRESENT AND BLACK WILL NATURALLY MOVE UP TO FILL THE VACUUM." SCHUMANN SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY DIFFICULTIES FROM THE WHITE UNIONS SHOULD JOB DESCRIPTIONS BE CHANGED DURING THE MECHANIZATION PROCESS.

3. THE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT,JOHANNESBURG STAR POSTULATED THAT DECISION TO MECHANIZE PRECIPATED BY UNCERTANITY OVER FUTURE SUPPLY OF LABOUR TO GOLD MINING INDUSTRY WHICH EMPLOYS ABOUT 390,000 AFRICANS,MOST OF THEM FOREIGN.ANOTHER FACTOR, ACCORDING TO STAR,WAS THAT BY DOUBLING BASIC PAY RATES OF AFRICAN MINERS OVER PAST TWO YEARS,INDUSTRY HAD CREATED SITUATION IN WHICH MINE LABOR BECOMING UNECONOMIC.CHAMBER REASONING IS THAT PAY INCREASES SHOULD BE MATCHED BY INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE THIS IS TO HUSBAND LABOR. HURD

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